

C O N N E C T I O N

Your Source for Employee Information

Budget Time

County Commissioners Court members, and the Budget & Finance staff opened up a week of workshops Aug. 15 on the Fiscal Year 2017 budget and tax rate for the county.

If you missed the main presentations, you can view them online at the Commissioners Court Agenda webpage — www.collincountytx.gov/government/Pages/agenda.aspx.

The remainder of the various hearings and discussions are also available on the county website.

Public hearings are set for **Sept. 6 and 12**, and the entire process is expected to wrap up on **Sept. 19**.



County's website continues to offer more & more to public

Few employees spend much time on the county's public website, for obvious reasons. A great many tend to busy themselves with creation of the data and records that make up such a large part of the collincountytx.gov site. So we thought we'd point out some statistics and features of the public pages that you may not know about.

For those who may not have noticed, the county website has been mobile-friendly for almost two years.

Over the past few years, reports on web activity showed that mobile browsers for smart phones and tablets steadily gained on – and then surpassed – other desktop and laptop computer browsers.

The folks in Information Technology spent the good part of 2014 to re-design and re-work the website to give mobile users easy access to most of what's offered online.

That's a lot of data, too; upwards of 800 internal pages, actually.

The county's website has offered a large amount of public access to county records of all types for years, from land records to inmate information, case lookups and warrants, forms and applications, lost dogs and cats. The list goes on and on.

We were also the first county to post our checkbook online, and have continued to post new and old data in new

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

ways and formats for our residents that help them do business with us -- and that helps them monitor how we use tax dollars.

The Apps

The biggest change since we folded in "responsive design" (mobile-friendly) has been IT jumping in to build our own applications, including Judicial Search. Since it launched in May 2015, the app's various pages occupy 8 of the top 10 visited pages on the entire website.

That translates into: two out of every three visits to our website by the public are to this one app.

Judicial Search contains inter-linked modules from our justice system -- current inmates, case lookups and warrants -- that allow visitors to jump back and forth between three levels of courts, as well as view mugshots, active warrants and related court cases. Months after that launch, IT added a Civil Papers search function to round it out.

The app recently won a "Best in Texas" award for 2016 from the Center for Digital Government for Best Application Serving the Public.

Before that, IT and the Elections Department drew up the Voter Line Wait Mobile Application in October 2012 to provide a solution to address long line waits during big elections.

The Elections Office needed an answer to alleviate voter frustration without giving the impression that they were being sent away from a polling site.

So they took a previously developed line-wait dashboard that identified less

busy polling centers and built a QR Code that launches a mobile GIS application to show voters other nearby centers with shorter waits. The voter merely scans a QR Code with their mobile device and decides whether to stay and wait, or move on to another location.

This, too, won a "Best of Texas" award in 2014 for its innovation, and is expected to come in handy during November's Presidential Election.

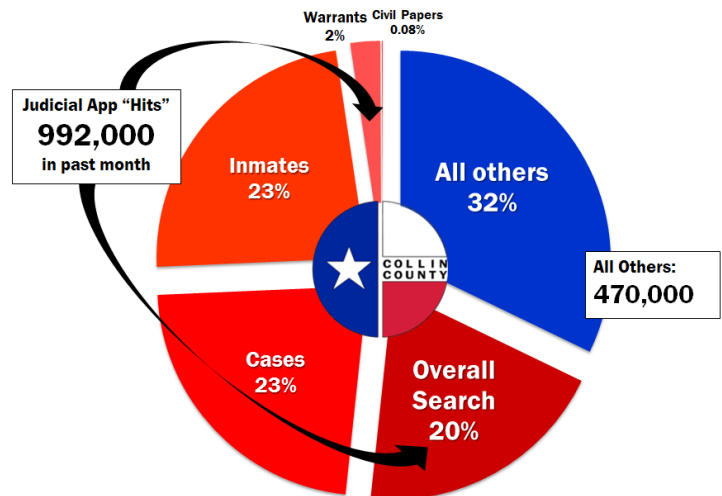
The latest app to be developed turned the County Clerk's Foreclosure Notices page into a useful, searchable app from large clusters of pdf files.

IT drew up an automated script that accessed the hundreds of monthly filings from mortgage-holder trustees and made the documents sortable by city, and searchable.

"I'm not aware that any of these apps can be found anywhere else in the nation," says IT's **Tim NOLAN**. "These all involve typical county functions, but I don't think you'll find anyone presenting these as well as Collin County does."

Nolan says a team of IT experts works directly with their in-house, county customers from start to finish to allow for improvements and changes to the apps as they are being developed, and the effort results in much better products for the public.

"It's gone so well that I can't imagine not doing it this way any longer," Nolan says. "Close collaboration is now the



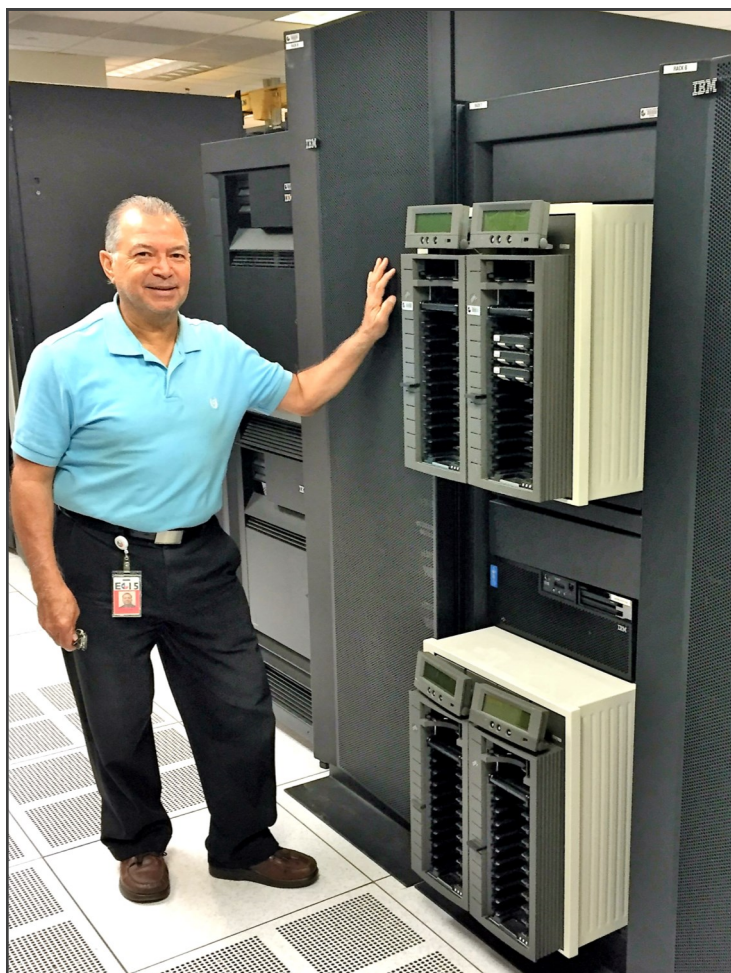
norm."

Public Access

The county website pulls in a range of 1.3 to 1.8 million pageviews, or hits, each month from some 248,000 "visitors" -- meaning, users tap into the website that many times, not individual people.

We don't track or try to identify folks coming into the website, but here's what we do know about them:

- ◆ They view about 5 pages on average per visit;
- ◆ It takes them an average of seven minutes to find what they want and move on;
- ◆ Tuesday is the busiest day of web activity;
- ◆ 11 a.m. is the busiest hour;
- ◆ They prefer Google Chrome as a browser;
- ◆ The most referrals from outside websites come from Google, and one-in-three visitors have our page bookmarked;
- ◆ First-time visitors outnumber returning visitors by 2-to-1;
- ◆ Windows is the most-used operating system, but the iPhone by itself comes in second, with about 3 million views in the last year.



Ready to retire, old friend?

Joe FIERRO of Information Technology is not retiring (yet) but the computer he has spent a great deal of his career working on is.

The AS/400 has been the cornerstone of Collin County's technology for over two decades. Many of the long-timers might remember the "green-screens." Back in the 90s, the AS/400 took up the entire server room, and used to be our core system running a homegrown criminal justice system, tax system, land deeds & vitals, HTE financials and work orders among others.

Today, many are now *Microsoft*-based, running on server blades — and the room-sized AS/400 is now itself a server blade, the size of a large takeout pizza box.

No one embraced the AS/400 like Joe, however. He has been its concierge for over 25 years. Many applications required a migration from the AS/400 to their respective systems. Joe and his team were always fully engaged as we ramped in these new systems. The AS/400 is still home to our HTE financial and facilities work order system and our legacy apps and data for lookup only, and Joe's been there for the entire ride.

He also recommended migrating the AS/400 to the blade, a move which has saved the County over \$100,000 in computer maintenance, annually. Nice work, Joe. So it's time to power down our old friend (the computer) and make way for new technology. We may never see another system stand the test of time like the AS/400. Then again, we may never see another manager like Joe.

E-Cigarettes: Wading through the 'mist' for facts & trends

A big concern with E-Cigarettes is use by adolescents. Although E-Cigarette manufacturers and lobby groups all claim to not sell or market to minors, statistics bely this fact. A study by the National Institute of Drug Abuse reports that 7 out of 10 teenagers have been exposed to E-Cigarette advertising.

About 16 percent of high school seniors reported using an E-Cigarette in the last month, with boys being twice as likely to use as girls. Around 30 percent of those who used E-Cigarettes began smoking cigarettes within 6 months.

Teenagers are particularly susceptible to the effects of Nicotine on the brain as their prefrontal cortex is still developing into their 20s. A possible consequence of continued use could be difficulty self-regulating and controlling impulses.

The E-Cigarette was invented in 2003 by a Chinese pharmacist who was a smoker himself and whose father died of lung Cancer. The company he worked for (Golden Dragon Holdings) developed the device and changed their name to *Ruyan* which means "like smoke." Introduction to the European market occurred in 2006 and product was introduced in the U.S. in 2007.

The E-Cigarette is a Nicotine delivery system which is typically comprised of

three parts: the atomizer, cartridge and a battery. Cartridges are filled with "e-juice" which is offered in various flavors and typically contains nicotine. The atomizer heats the liquid to a boiling point where a mist or vapor is produced and inhaled into the lungs. E-cigarettes are alternatively known as Vapes and the act of using one commonly called "vaping."

Proponents of the E-Cigarette claim this is a safe alternative to smoking because it is tobacco free and the juice contain less carcinogens than found in traditional cigarettes. Also, there is no ash produced as a byproduct of burning substances.

(Continued on page 8)



County Clerks Back the Blue

◀ The County Clerk's office is showing their support for law enforcement by wearing "Back the Blue" T-shirts every Friday. Money raised from the sale of the T-shirts will go to the families of the fallen officers of the Dallas and DART police departments, through the *Assist the Officer Foundation*.



District Clerk

▲ **Kacey ROYER** (left) received her 5-year service pin from District Clerk **Lynne FINLEY**. Kacey works in the Civil/Family section of the District Clerk's office.

Juvenile Probation

Juvenile Probation Officer **Chris SUTTON** was recognized for 30 years of service to Collin County. Officer Sutton currently serves as the victim's coordinator for the department. She is an invaluable asset, and the bridge between the department and citizens who are victims of crimes by young offenders. Officer Sutton ensures every victim is personally contacted and walks with them through all aspects of the juvenile process and victim's rights. She attends hearings with victims when victims need the additional support as they navigate through the judicial process. Her commitment to the juvenile probation department and the county is extraordinary.



Juvenile Detention

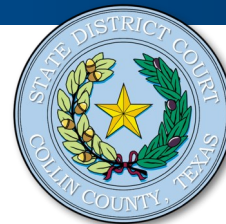
◀ Detention Officer **Gennetta BAIRD** receives her 15-year service pin from Superintendent **Jeff FALEFIA**. **David GLOVER**, **Chris CRAFT**, **John BELL**, **Cathy PANNELL**, and **Angela WILLIS** also celebrated 15 years' service with Collin County recently. Additionally, **Tommel HOPKINS** celebrated 10 years' service in the department.



Outstanding Mapping

Brett FENSTER of Information Technology receives a "Best of Show" award from **Amy ROSE**, of the South Central ARC Users Group, for his U.S. 75 map study done for Commissioners Court.

Juvenile Probation also recognized Officers **Carmichael WILLIAMS** and **Janelle BOYLE**, both receiving their 15-year service pins. Officer Williams is the Unit-Supervisor for Specialized Caseloads. Officer Boyle serves as a Field Supervision Officer designated in the McKinney Office.



Judicial Honors:

Judge Angela TUCKER: 199th DC

- ◆ Appointed Local Administrative Judge for Collin County
- ◆ Appointed to 6-year term on the *Judicial Advisory Council*
- ◆ Appointed to the *Texas Children's Justice Act Task Force*

Judge Cynthia WHELESS: 417th DC

- ◆ Recently named Co-Chair of a Judicial Disproportionality Workgroup in conjunction with The Supreme Court *Permanent Commission on Children and Families*
- ◆ Current chair of the Collin County Lincoln Day Dinner sponsored by the *Golden Corridor Republican Women's Club*
- ◆ Past recipient of the Collin County "Voice For Children" Award from CASA of Collin County
- ◆ Founding member of the Collin County Women Lawyers Association, which won an award for their inaugural program, "*The Exoneration of Michael Morton as told by a lawyer who participated - Patricia Cummings, Esq.*"
- ◆ Past board member of the *Rape Crisis Center of Collin County* and the *Collin County Council on Family Violence Board*.

Judge Emily MISKEL: 470th DC

- ◆ At the statewide Advanced Family Law Conference in San Antonio in August, Judge Miskel was awarded the *Joseph McKnight Award* by the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Texas for the best family law article, "*Electronically Stored Information A-Z: Acquire, Evaluate, Admit.*"



CCAL No. 7

Judge **David WADDILL** presented **Shawn GANT** (far right), Court Reporter for County Court at Law 7, with her 10-year service pin in mid-June. Also pictured, from left, are: Bailiff **Darryl SMITH** and Court Coordinator **Amy CUNDIFF**.



Health Care Services food drive

Ever wonder how those kids on free or reduced meals at school eat during the summer when school is out? Even though most communities have some type of summer meal programs, food pantries see a drastic increase during the summer months, which is typically a time when shelves are low. For some families, they have to decide to pay the increased electric bill or buy the extra food needed.

Health Care Services decided to help out these kids by sponsoring a food drive for the Community Food Pantry of McKinney. They collected 93 items during a two week drive. A majority of the donations was canned fruit, which the food pantry distributes an average of 500 cans per week. These employees made a difference in the lives of several families.

If your department is interested in conducting a food drive (which are needed year round), please contact **Carrie BRAZEAL**, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, at Ext. 4231.



Recent Retirements

◀ **Bonnie GUIMARIN** is presented her retirement plaque and thanked for her years of service with the Collin County Sheriff's Office by Sheriff **Terry BOX**.

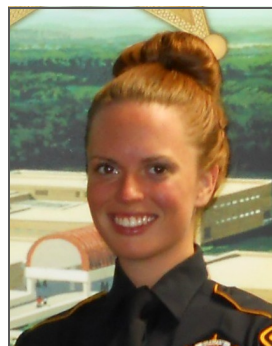


▲ **Mark RIGGS** received his retirement plaque and thanks for his years of service.



Lifesaver

▲ Sheriff Box recently presented **Tami McCULLOUGH** with a Lifesaving award for saving the life of an inmate.



Promotions

Sheriff Box announced recent promotions in his office, including (from left):

- ◆ **Matthew LANGAN** as the new CID Lieutenant;
- ◆ **Brandon POLK** to Jail Case Officer; and,
- ◆ **Paige STEVENS** to Transfer Officer.

Constables, Pct. 4, graduate from leadership college



◀ Constable **Joe WRIGHT** (upper left corner) and Chief Deputy **Mike MISSILDINE** (lower left) of Collin County Pct. 4 graduated from the 12th Class of the Texas Constable's Leadership College ceremony, held on May 15, 2015, in Huntsville. The class — made up of 25 Texas Constables and Deputies — completed three modules of training, including aspects of modern law enforcement management techniques, styles and philosophies. The program is designed to give a new generation of leadership assessment tools which will meet the existing challenges of their jobs.

Get ready for *Walk Across Texas* Fall Edition

Are you ready for Walk Across Texas 2016, Round 2? Sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and United Healthcare (UHC), we'll start on September 20 and end November 12, just in time for the holidays.

Did you know that the "average" person gains about 7 pounds during the holiday season (Halloween to Valentine's Day)? So get a head start on losing a few pounds or maintaining your current weight by Walking Across Texas.

Walk Across Texas works simply: teams of 8 pool their miles to see if they can walk the 800 miles across Texas in 8 weeks.

Team members don't work out together; in fact, they may not even know each other.

Team members may be recruited from coworkers, friends, family or neighbors.

Each team needs a captain and a name. To help identify county teams, each team name should start with "CC" (Collin County).

All team members report their weekly miles to their captain, who enters it online.

At the end of the 8 weeks, team members complete a wrap up form and the captain enters it.

Don't enjoy walking? No problem! A calculator is found on the website and converts all kinds of activities (dancing, lawn and garden activities, Pilates, home activities plus many others) into miles that are then entered online.

(Continued on page 8)



Unclaimed property events yields some serious money

County Clerk **Stacey KEMP**, together with the Texas Comptroller's Office, hosted an Unclaimed Property Search Event in the Commissioners Courtroom on July 20. Claims were approved for Collin County residents totaling \$302,718.37. The Comptroller's office reports that Collin County residents have more than \$46 million waiting to be claimed. To search for unclaimed property, visit the Comptroller's unclaimed property website at ClaimItTexas.org or call 1-800-654-FIND (3463).



Dog Days

Stacey KEMP and the County Clerk's office celebrated the Dog Days of Summer with a pizza luncheon — and collected donations for the county's Animal Shelter.

(Continued from page 3)

According to the Center for Disease Control, cigarette smoking accounts for over 480,000 deaths in the US yearly. Some ex-smokers do report having transitioned successfully to E-Cigarettes. However, long term effects of vaping have yet to be determined because it is such a new phenomenon. It will be years before the health impact of vaping is truly understood.

Nicotine is a stimulant which activates the circuitry in the brain that controls pleasure. Over time the reward centers of the brain are conditioned which lead the user to have strong compulsions to continue using the drug. Nicotine affects dopamine levels which can impact a user's ability to experience pleasure. Nicotine use has also been attributed to changes in the prefrontal cortex chemistry which is the part of the brain responsible for self-regulation.

It is worth noting that the brain does not differentiate between the conditioning received from Nicotine compared to such illicit drugs as Heroin, Methamphetamine or Cocaine. These too act on the brain's reward centers and there is evidence which suggests that addiction to Nicotine makes an individual more susceptible to other drugs.

Nicotine is potentially fatal to adults in dosages as little as 30-60mg and a mere 10mg may kill a child. A small vial of E-cigarette liquid may contain up to 100mg of nicotine.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, the number of calls to poison control centers because someone ingested the liquid nicotine mixture has skyrocketed in the past few years. A toddler died after drinking the liquid in 2011 and part of new FDA regulations require child-proof caps.

E-Cigarettes are currently a \$3 billion industry, with expectations to grow to \$50 billion by 2025. You cannot drive down the street without seeing a vape shop on a street corner.

How new FDA regulations will impact the market have yet to be seen. One

Vape manufacturer suggested the new regulations will "kill" the industry affecting over 10,000 businesses and 100,000 jobs. Others suggest the new regulations effectively put control of the industry into the hands of "big businesses" such as tobacco and pharmaceutical companies.

One thing for certain, revenues of that magnitude have a history of producing greed and profiteering which cares little for public welfare. It will be important going forward to remain vigilant and ensure facts don't get muddled in the vape mist.

-- **John-Mark MEULMAN**, *Collin County Substance Abuse Program Coordinator*

Substance Abuse team has a new addition

Our small staff of 2 consisting of **Grace J. RAULSTON**, LCDC, Program Administrator, **Janell DAVIS**, Front Office Coordinator has grown by one: Welcome **John-Mark MEULMAN**, LPC, LCDC, to the Collin County Substance Abuse Program team. John-Mark accepted the position of Program Coordinator in mid-July.

He obtained his masters degree from Amberton University in 2013, served five years in the U.S. Navy, and has a strong background in Substance Abuse/Dependency and Cognitive Behavioral and Solution Focused Therapies.

The addition of John-Mark's talents to our team will truly enhance CCSAP services to the Collin County community.



(Continued from page 7)



We'll have weekly random drawings to keep everyone motivated and to add a little fun.

Details are still being developed but get your walking shoes ready to go....we're heading to El Paso (or beyond!) in September.

Gather your team and email Carrie Brazeal with your team name and your captain so that you will start getting more information.

If you don't have a team or need a member or two for your team, let her know and we'll see what we can do.

Questions? Email **Carrie BRAZEAL** or call her at Ext. 4231.

CLASSIFIEDS

Brazeal Notary Services: We'll come to you for any notary need. Available evenings and weekends. Visit BrazealNotaryServices.com or contact **Carrie BRAZEAL** at 469-271-2377. 10% discount for county employees.